



HUMAN RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT CONCERNS IN NIGERIA: FOCUS ON INSECURITY

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ABSTRACT

Human rights enforcement in Nigeria has evolved from colonial-era protections to a modern constitutional framework under the 1999 Constitution (as amended), which mandates Chapter IV fundamental rights. Key milestones include the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) in 1995 and the 2009 Fundamental Rights (Enforcement Procedure) Rules, which modernized judicial processes. Despite these, enforcement faces challenges from security sector abuses, legal limitations on economic rights, and the legacy of military rule. Nigeria has serious human rights issues, especially when it comes to dealing with issues of insecurity and enforcement. The objective of this study was therefore to investigate the state of human right in Nigeria particularly when it comes to issues of insecurity. The study adopted the doctrinal research methodology and information was gathered from secondary sources such as books, journals, and internet articles as well as primary sources like laws, treaties, and court rulings. The findings of the research revealed that a number of elements such as terrorism, insurgency, intercommunal strife, police brutality, and impunity, are responsible for human rights abuses in Nigeria. It was also discovered that human rights protection in Nigeria has been significantly limited by the problem of insecurity, resulting in numerous injustices and abuses. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that there is need to implement comprehensive policies that foster the protection of human rights, enhance accountability systems and improve law enforcement capacities in Nigeria.

Keywords: Human Rights, Insecurity, Enforcement, Terrorism, Crisis

INTRODUCTION

Human rights and national security are important issues in today's society. Human rights are the essential guarantees of freedom and rights for every person. These rights, which have

their roots in the Magna Carta of 1215, are fundamental to Western philosophy.¹ Throughout the 20th century, human rights and national security were a prominent topic in international political and legal theory. Human rights are the fundamental freedoms and rights that all people have, regardless of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, or any other characteristics.² These rights are believed to be universal, inalienable, and indivisible, meaning that everyone has an equal claim to human rights and cannot be taken away under any circumstances.³ Everyone is entitled to equitable, dignified, and respectful treatment. This is the fundamental tenet of the human rights concept. Civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights are all included in the wide category of human rights. International Instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), regional human rights treaties like the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (1981), and state laws like the 1999 Constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) all safeguard these rights.⁴ These rights include the freedom of expression, assembly, fair hearing, personal liberty, dignity of person, and the right to life.

Insecurity in Nigeria is a complex problem that stems from a number of social, political, and economic factors. The country has been plagued by widespread violence, terrorism, kidnappings, and other criminal activity for a long time, leaving its citizens feeling uneasy and terrified all the time. Antagonism between various ethnic and religious groups, poverty, corruption, and inefficient government are some of the interconnected factors contributing to Nigeria's complicated insecurity.⁵ Inadequate legal and law enforcement systems exacerbate the problem by enabling criminals to evade punishment and sustaining a cycle of lawlessness and impunity. Nigeria's multiple military administrations and cultures have made it challenging to create and implement national security laws, which make it challenging to maintain a stable and legal environment. Both the victims of these atrocities at home and the international world continue to hold Nigeria accountable for its human rights abuses as a

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¹ Adekoya, C. O & Brems, E., "Poverty: Legal and Constitutional Implications for Human Rights Enforcement in Nigeria," *Afrika Focus* (2009) (22) (1) 20-29.

² Ibid.

³ D. Ibukun, 'Addressing the Paradox: Counterinsurgency, Human Rights and Women in Northeast Nigeria,' *The Age of Human Rights Journal* [2020] (15) 203–223.

⁴ TE Chinonso, 'Rule of Law and Enforcement of Rights in Nigeria: Common Practice and Challenges,' *SSRN Electronic Journal* [2023] (4) (1) 34.

⁵ Ibid.

member of the global community.⁶ As a result, there is a dynamic relationship between national security and human rights protection in Nigeria. Examining this relationship in light of Nigeria's responsibilities under international law and its own initiatives to protect its citizens is the aim of this study.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

Nigeria's legal framework for the defense of human rights is based on a set of laws intended to ensure that everyone's fundamental rights are respected, upheld, and protected across the country. The Constitution is the primary law of Nigeria that guarantees the protection of human rights.⁷ Furthermore, as shown below, Nigeria has accepted several international agreements that uphold and protect human rights.

a. International Framework

African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) are just a few of the international human rights treaties and conventions to which Nigeria is a party.⁸ These international agreements can be brought before Nigerian courts and provide additional protections for human rights.

b. National Framework

Fundamental human rights are protected under Chapter IV of the 1999 Constitution (as amended) of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. These rights include equality before the law, life, dignity, fair trial, freedom of expression, and freedom of association. Certain rights are under the authority of Nigerian courts.⁹ To address specific human rights issues, Nigeria has enacted a variety of laws and ordinances. In addition to protecting and advancing the welfare of children, the Child Rights Act 2003 tackles issues of child labour, child marriage, and educational access. The Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act 2015 addresses gender-based violence and provides victims with legal recourse.¹⁰ The National Human Rights

⁶CO Adekoya and E Brems, 'Poverty: Legal and Constitutional Implications for Human Rights Enforcement in Nigeria,' *Afrika Focus* [2009] (22) (1).

⁷ CO Adekoya and E Brems, 'Poverty: Legal and Constitutional Implications for Human Rights Enforcement in Nigeria,' *Afrika Focus* [2009] (22) (1).

⁸S. Ukhuegbe, 'Human Rights Discourses in Nigeria Across Time: Trajectory, Successes and Potentials for Canadian-Nigerian Engagement,' *The Transnational Human Rights Review* [2017] (4) (1) 4.

⁹S. Padilha, 'Access to Justice and Human Rights Protection in Nigeria (Sur, 2017)' <<https://sur.conectas.org/en/access-justice-human-rights-protection-nigeria/>> accessed on 18th March 2024.

¹⁰N Umejiaku, 'Advocating for the Protection of Rights of Children and Women in Nigeria: An Appraisal,' *Journal of Legal Studies* [2020] (26) (40) 48–65.

Commission (NHRC) Act 1995 established the NHRC, an independent body charged with promoting and protecting human rights in Nigeria.

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) is Nigeria's main national institution charged with promoting and protecting human rights. The NHRC investigates claims of violations of human rights, advocates for and educates the public about human rights, and counsels the government on ways to improve protection of human rights.¹¹ The interpretation and implementation of human rights laws depend heavily on Nigerian courts. The judiciary has the power to declare a statute unconstitutional if it infringes upon a fundamental right guaranteed by the constitution. Additionally, individuals can file a lawsuit in Nigerian courts to seek damages for violations of human rights.

FORMS OF INSECURITY CHALLENGES AFFECTING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

Numerous forms of insecurity exist in Nigeria, which contribute to a complex web of human rights problems. Conflicts between various ethnic and religious groups, economic challenges, political upheaval, and inadequate governance are some of the circumstances that lead to violations of fundamental human rights. This section will cover the various forms of insecurity that affect Nigerian human rights and how they affect the general public.

a. Terrorism and Insurgency: In the Northeast, extremist groups such as Boko Haram have caused enormous violence, population displacement, and severe human rights violations.¹² Targeting civilians usually leads to mass evictions, property destruction, and fatalities. In addition to causing fatalities and uprooting communities, the activities of these extremist groups also infringe basic human rights such as the right to life, the freedom of movement, and access to healthcare and education.¹³ The atmosphere of insecurity created by the Nigerian people's constant fear of attacks makes it difficult for them to exercise their fundamental rights.

b. Ethnic and Communal Violence: Particularly in central Nigeria and other regions, interethnic and communal conflicts have led to a number of human rights abuses, such as murders, forced displacement, and property damage. Historical grudges, competition for

¹¹S. Ukhuegbe, 'Human Rights Discourses in Nigeria Across Time: Trajectory, Successes and Potentials for Canadian-Nigerian Engagement,' *The Transnational Human Rights Review* [2017] (4) (1) 4.

¹²Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 35,000 People Killed Since 2009 Due to Violence and Insecurity Caused by Boko Haram (Globalr2p.org, 2021) 2 <<https://www.globalr2p.org/countries/nigeria/>> Accessed on 20th March 2024.

¹³S. Ukhuegbe, 'Human Rights Discourses in Nigeria Across Time: Trajectory, Successes and Potentials for Canadian-Nigerian Engagement,' *The Transnational Human Rights Review* [2017] (4) (1) 4.

resources, and subpar governance are some of the causes of these wars.¹⁴The breakdown of social cohesion and trust in communities affected by violence such as this compromises people's capacity to exercise their rights in a safe and secure environment.¹⁵ This is a violation of the rights to life, security, and peaceful assembly and it endangers people's lives, property, and means of subsistence.¹⁶

c. Herdsmen-Farmers Clashes: Land and resource disputes between nomadic herders and sedentary farmers have gotten more intense recently, especially in the Middle Belt. These conflicts have resulted in the loss of life, the uprooting of communities, the destruction of farmlands and means of livelihood, and an increase in tensions along ethnic and religious lines.¹⁷

d. Criminality and Violent Crime: In Nigeria's urban areas, there are still high rates of crime, including armed robberies, gang fighting, and carjacking. Inadequate law enforcement, corruption, and socioeconomic disparity are the main causes of criminal activity, endangering the safety and well-being of locals.¹⁸

e. Human Rights Violations by Security Forces: Numerous accounts exist of security agents violating human rights through extortion, torture, arbitrary detentions, and extrajudicial executions. The absence of responsibility and impunity for these actions further erodes the trust of law enforcement officials and threatens the rule of law.¹⁹ To address these insecurity challenges, a multifaceted approach is required that addresses underlying socioeconomic problems, strengthens security and law enforcement capacities, promotes dialogue and reconciliation, and upholds the rule of law and human rights principles. Improving dispute resolution processes, promoting inclusive government, and fostering community involvement are also crucial for establishing long-term peace and security in Nigeria.

IMPACT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS CAUSED BY INSECURITY

The problem of insecurity in Nigeria has had a significant impact on human rights, resulting in numerous abuses and injustices. These infractions have wide-ranging effects on many facets of society. The consequences of Nigeria's insecurity-related abuses of human rights will be covered in detail in this section.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵N. Ideyi, *The Root Cause of Violence in Nigeria: The Niger Delta Crisis, A Reference Point* (Educational Research and Publishers Limited, 2003) 97.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷SB Morgen, *Report on Small Arms, Mass Atrocities and Migration in Nigeria* (SB Morgen, 2020) 40.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹M. Kambel, 'Counter-Insurgency and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria,' *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization, International Institute for Science, Technology and Education* [2019] (5) 85.

Loss of Life and Physical Harm: Extrajudicial executions, targeted killings, and conflict-related deaths are examples of human rights crimes that take innocent lives and injure people physically. Within the impacted communities, this not only causes acute pain but also feeds a vicious cycle of trauma and terror.²⁰Insecurity in Nigeria has evolved from sporadic criminal activities into a pervasive, hydra-headed crisis that threatens the nation's survival. The most tragic consequence of this instability is the alarming loss of lives, which has transformed from occasional incidents into a consistent, daily occurrence of bloodshed. Ranging from insurgency in the northeast to banditry in the northwest and inter-communal violence in the central region, the nation is witnessing a significant human security crisis where thousands of lives are lost annually. The scale of mortality due to insecurity is staggering. Reports²¹ suggest that between 2011 and 2024, nearly 92,000 deaths were recorded due to security incidents. Recent statistics indicate an escalation, with over 10,200 civilians killed across northern Nigeria in the 18 months between early 2023 and mid-2025. In 2025 alone, Nigeria witnessed 750 deaths linked to terrorism, marking the highest death toll since 2020 and a 46% increase from the previous year.²²

Displacement and Forced Migration: Because of the conflict, violence, and persecution brought on by insecurity, millions of Nigerians are forced to leave their homes. Individuals who have experienced displacement frequently lack access to basic necessities, have uncertain futures, and are more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation.²³ This movement strains host communities and intensifies social discontent, in addition to disrupting the lives of those displaced. Displaced populations are more likely to face instability, as well as increased vulnerability to exploitation, abuse, and more violence.

Erosion of Social Cohesion: Human rights breaches that are fuelled by insecurity deepen racial, religious, and regional divides in society. This weakens social cohesiveness, erodes community trust, and breeds mistrust and hostility, which impedes efforts at peacebuilding and reconciliation.²⁴

Disruption of Economic Activities: Economic activity is disrupted by insecurity, which results in diminished investment and development prospects, infrastructure degradation, and

²⁰F Tinuola and B Oriola, 'Insecurity and Sexual Rights Violations of the Female Minors in Internally Displaced Camps in Nigeria,' *The Journal of Sexual Medicine* [2016] (13) (2) 231–32.

²¹Adeyeye P. *The Changing face of Insecurity in Nigeria*. Available from; www.google.com/amp/s/www.dataphyte.com. Accessed 12th April, 2026.

²²Olaiya TT. *Nigeria ranks 146th on Global Peace Index, 8th least peaceful in Africa*. Available from; http://m.guardian.ng/news/nigeria_ranks_on_global_index. Accessed 10th April 2026.

²³ TE Chinonso, 'Rule of Law and Enforcement of Rights in Nigeria: Common Practice and Challenges,' *SSRN Electronic Journal* [2023] (4) (1) 34.

²⁴MA Aluko, 'Sociological Dimensions of Human Rights Violations in Nigeria,' *Journal of Social Sciences* [2003] (7) (3) 161–70.

livelihood loss. Economic hardship is made worse by human rights breaches including extortion, looting, and property destruction, especially for vulnerable groups.²⁵

Psychological and Emotional Trauma: Human rights breaches cause severe psychological and emotional distress to victims and impacted populations, including anxiety, sadness, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).²⁶This impairs not just the wellbeing of the individual but also the recuperation and resilience of the community.

Insecurity in Nigeria has transcended physical violence to become a profound, sustained psychological and emotional crisis. From the Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast and banditry in the Northwest to kidnapping, farmer-herdsmen conflicts, and armed robbery across the nation, millions of Nigerians live under constant threat. While the economic and physical consequences such as loss of life, property destruction, and displacement are widely documented, the enduring, invisible scars of trauma are frequently overlooked. This essay explores the profound psychological and emotional trauma caused by insecurity in Nigeria, identifying it as a silent epidemic that shapes the daily lives, cognitive functions, and emotional well-being of the population.²⁷

The primary emotional impact of widespread insecurity is the normalisation of fear. Individuals constantly live "on the edge," unsure of what each new day may bring. This pervasive atmosphere of uncertainty leads to high levels of anxiety and a state of constant watchfulness, often referred to as hypervigilance. Studies indicate that a significant percentage of victims in conflict zones exhibit symptoms of being easily startled and constantly checking for safety. Prolonged exposure to this environment can cause emotional numbness, where individuals become detached from their surroundings as a defense mechanism against overwhelming stress.²⁸

Victims of kidnapping, banditry, and terrorism often suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and related mental health conditions. Survivors of violence, including families who have lost loved ones, experience re-occurring nightmares, flashbacks, and an inability to process the traumatic event. In Northwestern Nigeria, studies revealed that banditry causes significant trauma among students, leading to fear and inability to concentrate. The psychological damage extends beyond the event; a 2024 study in Plateau

²⁵M. Kambel, 'Counter-Insurgency and Human Rights Violations in Nigeria,' *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization, International Institute for Science, Technology and Education* [2019] (5) 87.

²⁶Sandra Ikenyei, 'Health and Social Consequences of Human Rights Violations in Rural Nigeria,' *International Social Science Journal* [2022] (72) (245) 829–52.

²⁷Ali AD. Security and Economic Development in Nigeria since 1960. *Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*.(2025); 2 (6), 1-7.

²⁸Obansiagbon, E.I, Akintoye, E.O. Insecurity Crisis in Nigeria: The Law Enforcement Agents as Panacea? *Journal of Sociology and Social Work*. (2025); 7 (1) 44 – 51.

State found that 38.5% of respondents still experienced depression four years after a major incident.²⁹

The psychological trauma directly impacts behaviour and socioeconomic life. People fear traveling, especially at night, and often boycott school or work, leading to disruptions in livelihoods. In areas heavily affected by kidnapping, students show increased fear and lack of concentration, severely affecting academic performance. Furthermore, the erosion of trust in the security system leads to feelings of hopelessness and desperation, which in turn can foster a "survival of the fittest" mentality, further destroying social cohesion and empathy within communities.³⁰

Insecurity in Nigeria has led to a surge in depression, anxiety disorders, and suicidal ideation, particularly among displaced populations and families of victims. The prolonged helplessness often leads to negative coping mechanisms, such as drug abuse, as people seek ways to numb their emotional pain. Additionally, cultural trauma emerges when entire groups experience profound disruption to their identity, leaving lasting scars on the collective consciousness. The inability to access mental health services due to scarcity of professionals or stigma means these conditions often go untreated, resulting in generational transmission of trauma.³¹

Undermining Rule of Law and Governance: Pervasive human rights breaches degrade public confidence in institutions, threatens the rule of law, and sabotages governance frameworks. Human rights violators who go unpunished promote a culture of lawlessness and thwart initiatives to advance accountability and justice.³²

International Reputation and Diplomatic Relations: Nigeria's worldwide reputation is damaged and diplomatic ties with other nations and international organisations are strained by persistent human rights breaches connected to insecurity.³³ The nation may have diplomatic, economic, and geopolitical fallout from this.

In the modern era of globalisation, the internal security of a nation is no longer a localized issue; it is a critical determinant of its international standing. Insecurity as defined by terrorism, banditry, political instability, and ethnic conflicts transcends borders, profoundly impacting a country's external relations and global image. When a state fails to safeguard the

²⁹Eselebor WA. Porous Borders and Human Trafficking in Nigeria. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 2024; 3 (1) 51 – 59

³⁰ Sandra Ikenyei, 'Health and Social Consequences of Human Rights Violations in Rural Nigeria,' *International Social Science Journal* [2022] (72) (245) 829–52.

³¹ Etim EE, Nwagboso CI. "Ethno-Religious Conflicts and Insecurity in Nigeria's 4th Republic" *Internal Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*. (2025) 6(6).

³² Brenda Alongi, 'Political Thuggery and Insecurity in Nigeria,' *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* [2021] (05) (07) 58

³³ Adewoyin SA. Porous Borders, Small Arms Proliferation, and Insecurity in Oke-Ogun Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*. 2024; 3 (1),102-113

lives and property of its citizens, it projects an image of instability and inefficiency, which directly leads to a degradation of its international reputation and a severe strain on its diplomatic relations.³⁴

Insecurity acts as a persistent negative branding mechanism. Frequent reports of conflict, kidnappings, and mass displacement, often amplified by international media, dominate the narrative of the affected nation. As the international community and international bodies, such as the United Nations, observe these challenges, the perception of a "failing state" emerges, replacing any previously positive image. For instance, persistent domestic insecurity in Nigeria has caused it to be viewed not just as a regional leader, but as a nation grappling with institutional dysfunction.³⁵

Furthermore, insecurity stigmatizes citizens abroad. Nigerians in the diaspora, for example, have reported facing increased scrutiny at international borders, visa restrictions, and negative stereotyping, which are direct consequences of a tarnished international image. Diplomatic relations are designed to foster cooperation, but persistent insecurity makes interaction cautious, sceptical, and sometimes hostile. Foreign nations often approach relations with affected states with caution, frequently tying diplomatic aid and partnerships to improvements in security and human rights standards.

Limited Access to Education and Healthcare: People lose their access to health and education when schools close and medical services are interrupted because of insecurity.³⁶

Insecurity, characterized by armed conflict, banditry, kidnapping, and terrorism, represents one of the most significant obstacles to human development in the 21st century. While the immediate casualties of violence are visible, the indirect consequences of sustained insecurity specifically the erosion of access to education and healthcare are far-reaching and potentially more devastating. When schools are turned into battlegrounds and hospitals become targets, the foundational pillars of a functional society collapse. Insecurity disrupts access to these vital services through the destruction of infrastructure, the displacement of professionals, and the creation of a pervasive fear that prevents citizens from seeking care or pursuing knowledge.

Insecurity acts as a direct assault on the educational sector. In many conflict-prone regions, schools are directly attacked, leading to the destruction of facilities and learning materials. Kidnappings of students and teachers from schools have instilled fear in parents, causing

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Sandra Ikenyei, 'Health and Social Consequences of Human Rights Violations in Rural Nigeria,' *International Social Science Journal* [2022] (72) (245) 854.

many to withdraw their children from education to avoid losing them or paying massive ransoms. This phenomenon dramatically increases the number of out-of-school children, particularly affecting girls, as distance and perceived risks become insurmountable barriers.³⁷ Furthermore, insecurity creates an unstable academic calendar. Frequent closures, either out of fear or due to schools being occupied by armed groups or displaced persons, interrupt the learning process, leading to significant learning losses. In extreme cases, insecurity leads to the "brain drain" of educators, who flee affected areas for safer locations, leaving schools with inadequate staffing and reduced educational manpower. Consequently, educational attainment suffers, and the quality of graduates declines, hindering national development aspirations.

The impact of insecurity on healthcare is equally devastating, often resulting in a "double impact" where physical injuries from violence are compounded by the unavailability of treatment. Armed violence directly restricts physical access to health facilities. Patients fear travelling to hospitals, and ambulances often cannot navigate routes due to checkpoints or active conflict.

Insecurity also triggers the migration of healthcare professionals away from conflict zones, creating a critical shortage of skilled personnel in areas that need them most. Facilities that remain functional often suffer from a lack of electricity, water, and essential medicines due to disrupted supply chains, forcing health workers to operate under severe distress. Furthermore, insecurity leads to a breakdown of preventive healthcare. Vaccination programs are interrupted, leading to outbreaks of diseases, and routine maternal and childcare services become unavailable, driving up mortality rates among the most vulnerable populations.

Restricted Freedom of Movement and Expression: Fear of violence can make it more difficult for someone to move about freely, engage in critical thought, or interact with others in public.

Marginalisation and Alienation: Human rights violations also cause some sections in Nigerian society to feel excluded and alienated. Underprivileged communities, religious minorities, and minority groups are often the most affected by human rights breaches, which can leave them feeling angry, irritated, and disenchanted with the government. The nation's security situation may deteriorate as a result of this sense of isolation, which may encourage recruitment by armed militias and extremist groups.³⁸

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Ibid.

Human rights abuses have had a major effect on Nigeria's security situation. Human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, torture, and enforced disappearances, have made people distrustful and afraid. These crimes are commonly committed by both non-state actors, such as criminal organisations and armed groups, and state actors, such as the police and military. Criminals frequently behave without consequence since they are aware that it is improbable that they would be held responsible for their crimes.

MECHANISMS FOR THE ENFORCEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Human rights abuses is an international issue, and Nigeria is not an exception. Nigeria's human rights enforcement is beset by a number of issues, such as deficient institutions, corruption, and a dearth of accountability. This section examines the primary channels for pursuing and delivering justice as it relates to Nigeria's systems for enforcing violations of human rights.

i. Judicial Remedies: Human rights violation victims have access to the legal system to seek compensation. To defend their legal rights and get reparations for their losses, the victims may seek legal action in Nigerian courts.³⁹ In deciding matters pertaining to human rights, interpreting pertinent legislation, and making sure that justice is done, the court is essential.

ii. National Human Rights Commission (NHRC): Nigerian human rights are promoted and safeguarded by the NHRC; an autonomous organisation created by law. It takes complaints about infringement of human rights, looks into the claims, and suggests corrective measures to the appropriate authorities.⁴⁰ Despite lacking prosecution authority, the NHRC's conclusions and suggestions can support victim reparation and accountability.

iii. International Human Rights Mechanisms: Human rights violations also cause some sections in Nigerian society to feel excluded and alienated. Underprivileged communities, religious minorities, and minority groups are often the most affected by human rights breaches, which can leave them feeling angry, irritated, and disenchanted with the government. The nation's security situation may deteriorate as a result of this sense of isolation, which may encourage recruitment by armed militias and extremist groups.⁴¹ Human rights abuses have had a major effect on Nigeria's security situation. Human rights violations, such as extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, torture, and enforced disappearances, have made people distrustful and afraid. These crimes are commonly committed by both non-state

³⁹Section 46 of the 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).

⁴⁰National Human Rights Commission Act 1995.

⁴¹VandenhoeWouter, 'Completing the UN Complaint Mechanisms for Human Rights Violations Step by Step: Towards a Complaints Procedure Complementing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights,' *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* [2003] (21) (3) 428.

actors, such as criminal organisations and armed groups, and state actors, such as the police and military.

Public Interest Litigation: In order to defend human rights and prosecute cases of abuses, civil society organisations, human rights organisations, and public interest attorneys are essential. Litigation based on public interest has the potential to increase consciousness, garner backing, and ensure that public officials answer for violations of human rights.⁴²

Government Agencies and Ombudsman Offices: Among the government agencies charged with investigating claims of human rights violations and bringing those responsible to justice are the Nigeria Police Force, the Independent and Corrupt Practices Commission, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, and ombudsman offices.⁴³ However, the effectiveness of these agencies in resolving human rights violations may vary due to factors like political interference and capacity constraints.

Civil Society Monitoring and Advocacy: Civil society groups keep an eye out for abuses of human rights, record them, and push for changes to policies and practices to hold people accountable. Their advocacy work has the power to compel government officials to act to stop violations of human rights and enhance their defence.⁴⁴

Media and Public Awareness: The media is essential in bringing attention to abuses of human rights, increasing public awareness, and holding elected officials responsible.⁴⁵ Media outlets and journalists frequently draw attention to violations of human rights, give victims' voices more weight, and push for justice and responsibility.

Public Protests and Demonstrations: Human rights violations in Nigeria are also enforced through advocacy campaigns, open rallies, and protests. When people unite to demand justice and accountability, they may push for legislation that protects and upholds human rights.⁴⁶ Nigeria uses the judiciary, international organisations, media, civil society organisations, and grassroots movements as part of a multifaceted strategy to prosecute violations of human rights. By using these tools collectively, individuals and organisations can collaborate to build a more just and rights-respecting society in Nigeria. Even though there are numerous

⁴²AdeakinIbikunle, 'The Military and Human Rights Violations in Post-1999 Nigeria: Assessing the Problems and Prospects of Effective Internal Enforcement in an Era of Insecurity,' *African Security Review* [2016] (25) (2) 68.

⁴³SuzzieOyakhire, 'Protection of Victim-Witnesses of Human Rights Violations in Criminal Prosecutions in Nigeria,' *The Transnational Human Rights Review* [2021] (8) (1) 70.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵K Nduka, 'Legal Implications of Human Rights Violations During COVID-19 Lockdown in Nigeria,' *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, International Institute for Science, Technology and Education [2020] (5) (76) (13) 100-108.

³⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ObiaguAdaobiagu and OkechukwuNwaubani, 'The Challenges of Teaching for Human Rights in Nigeria: Knowledge, Pedagogy and Activism,' *Human Rights Education Review* [2020] (3) (2) 4.

challenges to overcome, with perseverance and collaboration, progress may be made in holding criminals accountable and ensuring that everyone's human rights are upheld.

CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING INSECURITY AND UPHOLDING HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

The critical issue of resolving insecurity and preserving human rights persists in Nigeria. The nation faces several insurgencies, bandits, kidnappings, and acts of communal violence, all of which have a significant negative impact on human rights. The difficulties in combating insecurity and defending human rights in Nigeria will be discussed in detail in this section.

a. Corruption: The pervasive corruption in security organisations is one of the main obstacles to tackling insecurity in Nigeria. The efficacy of security operations is compromised by a lack of openness and accountability, which also erodes public trust.⁴⁷ Because security personnel may use extrajudicial executions, torture, and arbitrary arrests in the pretext of preventing insecurity, corruption frequently results in human rights violations.

b. Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons: Another significant issue is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, which fuel the many forms of insecurity that exist in the country. Open borders and weak arms control regulations exacerbate the security issue by making it easier for criminal elements to obtain firearms.⁴⁸ In addition to making wars more lethal, the illicit arms trade poses a major threat to the human rights of onlookers caught in the crossfire.

c. Deficiency in Resources and Training: One of the biggest challenges to combating instability and preserving human rights is the security services' inadequate funding and training. Inadequate budget results in undertrained and disheartened security staff, which impairs their capacity to neutralize threats. The problem is made worse by inadequate training, which raises the possibility of violations of human rights occurring during security operations.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ObiaguAdaobiagu and OkechukwuNwaubani, 'The Challenges of Teaching for Human Rights in Nigeria: Knowledge, Pedagogy and Activism,' *Human Rights Education Review* [2020] (3) (2) 4.

⁴⁸Ibukun David, *Addressing the Paradox: Counterinsurgency, Human Rights and Women in Northeast Nigeria* (Universidad de Jaen, 2020) 204.

⁴⁹ObiaguAdaobiagu and OkechukwuNwaubani, 'The Challenges of Teaching for Human Rights in Nigeria: Knowledge, Pedagogy and Activism,' *Human Rights Education Review* [2020] (3) (2) 7.

d. Ethnic and Religious Division: Addressing insecurity in Nigeria is significantly hampered by racial and religious divides. Aimless people and organisations frequently take advantage of these weaknesses to incite violence and further their own objectives. The ensuing confrontations pose a threat to community safety and also result in flagrant human rights abuses, such as discrimination, targeted attacks based only on identification, and relocation.⁵⁰

Lack of Cooperation and Coordination: Lack of coordination and cooperation between the various governmental levels and security services hinders effective efforts to tackle instability. Fragmented approaches to security issues lead to information gaps, duplication of effort, and a lack of coordination across response systems.⁵¹ This lack of unity not only undermines the larger security system but also makes it more challenging to protect human rights in violent areas.

Culture of Impunity: Nigeria's culture of impunity for human rights abuses feeds the country's violent and unstable cycle. Abusers frequently escape punishment, which breeds mistrust and terror among the populace.⁵² The absence of accountability mechanisms results in the denial of justice to victims and an unbroken cycle of violence, so exacerbating the challenge of addressing insecurity and safeguarding human rights.

Political Instability and Governance Issues: The institutions in charge of tackling insecurity and defending human rights are weakened by political instability, poor governance, and corruption. Cycles of violence and violations of human rights are sustained by a lack of political will to carry out reforms, deal with the underlying causes of conflict, and advance inclusive government.⁵³

Inadequate Legal Framework and Judicial Capacity: Gaps in the legal system, such as obsolete or ineffectual legislation, make it more difficult to prosecute offenders and provide victims with compensation, even in the face of existing laws and procedures for the protection of human rights. Court overcrowding, protracted legal proceedings, and judicial inefficiency further prevent victims of human rights abuses from accessing justice.⁵⁴

⁵⁰Mayerfeld Jamie, 'Reply: Upholding Human Rights Is Our Shared Responsibility,' *Human Rights Review* [2018] (19) (3) 406.

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Brenda Alongi, 'Political Thuggery and Insecurity in Nigeria,' *International Journal of Social Science and Human Research* [2021] (05) (07) 60.

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibukun David, *Addressing the Paradox: Counterinsurgency, Human Rights and Women in Northeast Nigeria* (Universidad de Jaen, 2020) 203.

Socioeconomic Inequalities: Social tensions and insecurity are intensified by high rates of poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality.⁵⁵ Because they are less able to access economic opportunities and essential services, marginalised populations are more susceptible to being recruited by criminal organisations and being exploited, which further compromises their human rights.

Lack of Trust in Institutions: A general mistrust of government agencies, such as the court, police, and human rights organisations, impedes attempts to combat insecurity and defend human rights. People are discouraged from asking for help and reporting infractions due to beliefs about prejudice, corruption, and inefficiency, which feeds the cycle of impunity.⁵⁶

External Factors and Regional Dynamics: External factors like cross-border threats, weapons trafficking, and regional instability often influence Nigeria's security concerns. Efforts to effectively address transnational security threats and protect human rights are hampered by a lack of regional coordination and collaboration.⁵⁷ The government, civic society, international allies, and local communities must collaborate to strengthen the rule of law, promote accountability, address the root causes of insecurity, and establish inclusive institutions that protect and defend each Nigerian's human rights in order to overcome these challenges.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, human rights abuses have a significant influence on Nigerian instability, feeding a vicious cycle of mistrust, violence, and fear. It is crucial that these violations be rectified and those guilty held accountable in order to guarantee the protection of all Nigerians' human rights, restore public trust in the government, and promote peace and stability. The judicial system and the National Human Rights Commission are two avenues for enforcing violations of human rights. By providing avenues for redress, promoting accountability, and fostering an environment of respect for the rule of law and human rights, these actions taken together make it easier to punish human rights violations in Nigeria. However, problems like corruption, institutional weaknesses, and political interference can reduce the effectiveness of these institutions, which highlights the need for continuous efforts to strengthen the country's human rights defence.

⁵⁵Connect SAIS Africa, Social Violence in Nigeria (Connect SAIS Africa) <www.connectsaisafrica.org/research/african-studies-publications/social-violence-nigeria/> Accessed on 26th March, 2024.

⁵⁶Benjamin Varlese, *Challenges for the Global Community Addressing Human Rights and Humanitarian Crises* (Academia Letters, 2021) 7.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Maintaining the rule of law, defending human rights, and building a society where everyone may live in safety and dignity must be top priorities for the Nigerian government. Nigeria faces intricate and interconnected challenges in addressing insecurity and upholding human rights. A comprehensive and well-coordinated response is necessary to address all of these issues, which range from ethnic disparities and a lack of coordination to the proliferation of weaponry and corruption in security organisations. Addressing these concerns head-on and prioritising respect for human rights in all security operations could be the first step towards building a more secure and just society for all Nigerians. When it comes to addressing issues of insecurity and enforcement, Nigeria has significant human rights concerns.

Several factors contribute to human rights violations in Nigeria, including inter-communal conflict, terrorism, insurgency, police brutality, and impunity. To successfully address these issues, comprehensive policies that strengthen accountability frameworks, enhance law enforcement capabilities, and prioritise human rights protection must be put into place. When discussing human rights issues in Nigeria, the following actions must be taken into account:

Combating Terrorism and Insurgency: Counterterrorism efforts must adhere to international humanitarian law and human rights norms, prioritise civilian protection, and address poverty, marginalisation, and social inequity through inclusive development programs and community participation.

Police Reform and Accountability: Reformation of law enforcement agencies, including the Nigeria Police Force, is crucial to combat police violence and impunity. This includes professionalising the force, improving training on human rights laws, and implementing efficient supervision systems.

Protecting Vulnerable Populations: Special attention should be given to protecting vulnerable populations' rights to legal protection, psychosocial support services, and humanitarian aid, using targeted interventions and social welfare programs.

Strengthening Judicial Independence and Access to Justice: Maintaining the rule of law and ensuring justice are crucial for protecting human rights. Enhancing judicial independence, competency, and legal aid services can facilitate remedies and reparation for human rights breaches.

Promoting Human Rights Education and Awareness: Human rights education and awareness-raising programs are crucial for promoting respect for rights and civic involvement. Focus should be on law enforcement, judges, civil society, and the general public, while ensuring media freedom and expression.

Engagement with International Partners and Mechanisms: To solve human rights issues, Nigeria need international cooperation, technical assistance, capacity-building, and advocacy. Active involvement in regional and international organisations is essential for accountability and respect. Human rights concerns in Nigeria necessitate a multifaceted approach that includes accountability frameworks, inclusive development initiatives, and human rights-preserving security measures. By prioritising the protection of human rights and bolstering the rule of law, Nigeria may address insecurity and enforcement concerns in a manner that preserves justice, dignity, and social cohesion.